

Freeway will take out homes, businesses

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Changes over the years to the proposed South Mountain Loop 202 became apparent Saturday when members of the Citizens Advisory Team took a bus tour of the freeway's proposed route.

In Ahwatukee Foothills, while large swatches of land next to Pecos Road had been purchased years ago, additional homes will have to be bought since the Arizona Department of Transportation expanded a 1985 design from six lanes to the new standard of 10 lanes.

That leaves some homeowners, who thought they were safe when they purchased their home, now in the "red zone."

Other homes, especially along Redwood Lane between 26th Street and 27th Place, were built within the original right of way and will also have to go.

On the west side of the proposed route, the freeway will brush up against a giant fuel storage facility that required approval from the federal Department of Homeland Security.

The freeway will also pass over at least one Superfund toxic waste site, where groundwater has been contaminated over the years. According to Amy Edwards, an engineer with HDR, which is the lead design firm working on the freeway, that shouldn't be a problem.

"That is not a concern unless we enter into the water table with our construction, which we don't plan to do," she said.

Along with 255 homes in Ahwatukee Foothills scheduled to be demolished, 114 more homes and 69 businesses on the west side will need to be taken out to make room for the freeway, along with railroad tracks and rail spur lines that would have to be accommodated, fiber optic lines and water and sewer lines relocated.

The freeway will also cut into several South Mountain ridges, one in the park's boundary. According to Gila River Indian Community members the mountain is significant to their religion and culture.

When voters passed Proposition 400 in 2004, the freeway was budgeted at \$1.1 billion. But according to estimates released by ADOT in August, the cost is now around \$1.6 billion and climbing.

A draft Environmental Impact Statement has been written and is being reviewed by the federal government before it is released to the public for comments some time next year. Once the public comments have been evaluated and incorporated into the document the final environmental impact statement goes to Washington for approval.

For more information, visit www.southmountainfreeway.com to be directed to the new ADOT site that contains maps and information on the proposed freeway.

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